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ENGLISH EQUIPMENT¹

It is no indiscreet disclosure of a professional secret to say that the conditions under which the English work of our schools is done, and the results of such work, are not altogether satisfactory. Your committee has taken such to be a generally accepted fact, and has not thought it necessary to resort to the overworked questionnaire in order to give it elaborate statistical statement. The appointment of the Committee on Equipment for School and College Work in English may be taken as evidence in the case and an assumption of what all English teachers know to be true, i.e., that many schools have but inadequate equipment for English work. The causes of the present conditions are not considered within the scope of this report. The committee will confine itself, therefore, to a statement of the comparative cost of English equipment at present and to an outline of the materials which schools should provide for English work.

Of course any suggestion which calls for the expenditure of money is met with the cry that there is no more money available. In answer to that cry it is pertinent to call attention to the report of the Committee on Composition. For the sake of completeness, even at the risk of tiresome repetition, it seems well to restate some of the findings of that committee.

According to the figures of the table the teaching cost of English is less per pupil than that of any other subject listed, and the equipment cost per pupil in English and in history is very much less than that for any other subject which requires extensive equipment, less than that of any other subject except the languages and mathematics. It is not necessary to pass judgment upon the present equipment for any other department. The point to be insisted upon is this: since there has been money in the past to provide this comparatively elaborate equipment and teaching force for other subjects, there evidently is money available, and it is now time for the needs of the English work to receive due attention.

¹ A report presented to the National Council of Teachers of English, November 30, 1912.

So far in the history of the English work of the schools, ideas of desirable equipment have been very indefinite. Aside from a general though vague call for better libraries, there has been little consistent demand for material equipment. As a result, much that would be very useful in the way of maps, charts, and exercise material is not now on the market. It is the hope of the committee, however, that it may be able to call attention to some of the helps that are available, and perhaps bring such a general call for other helps that the publishing houses will come to the rescue.

AVERAGE TEACHING COST AND EQUIPMENT COST PER PUPIL IN
THE HIGH SCHOOLS REPORTING*

Subject	No. Schools Reporting Teaching Cost	Average Teaching Cost per Pupil	No. Schools Reporting Equipment Cost	Equipment Cost per Pupil	Average Annual Increase per Pupil
English	106	\$ 7.80	63	\$ 1.75	\$ 0.06
Latin	104	9.44	55	1.62	0.09
German	99	11.01	53	1.28	0.12
French	27	9.84	10	1.75	0.06
Mathematics	105	8.53	52	.75	0.08
History	103	7.88	60	2.39	0.22
Physics	95	12.59	63	19.71	1.30
Chemistry	84	14.98	58	23.49	1.44
Biology	86	9.17	64	9.02	0.69
Domestic science	44	7.75	38	10.90	0.62
Manual training	60	13.57	40	28.51	1.51
Commercial	78	10.17	38	4.55	0.33
Physical geography	29	7.04	15	8.66	0.56
Physiology	12	6.10	6	4.02	0.23
Agriculture	9	15.40	5	10.75	4.50

* The figures presented here are advance figures from the report of the Committee on Composition. They are accurate for the schools reporting, but the averages are subject to change when other reports come in.

The most important material aid to the teaching of English is a good library. This fact is well understood in the college and the university, but so much cannot be said of the elementary and secondary schools. But it is just in the years during which the child and the youth is in these schools that his social and moral nature gets its bent from books. Anyone who has given the matter attention knows how completely the moral and social judgments of a youth are determined by his reading; not always, be it noted, by his reading in school! How narrow the influence of that school reading may be is indicated by an investigation made by Miss

Sarah McNary, of the State Normal School, Trenton, N.J., and reported in the *English Journal* for June, 1912. Her finding is that the reading of the high-school pupil in his four-year English course ranged in amount from twelve to thirty-three "classics," with a few books for "outside reading" each year. A similar investigation in Missouri a few years ago indicated a precisely similar condition.

The result of the narrowness of the work of the English department, due in part at least to lack of library, is shown by a recent study of the voluntary reading of 236 pupils under better than average conditions. Of the 1,175 books reported as read during the year, 60 per cent were fiction, 2 per cent were popular science, and 8 per cent were biography. Recent biography was represented only by Mark Twain, Tolstoi, and Mrs. Eddy. Of the students reporting, most of them regular attendants at church, only four had read any book of a religious nature. Only eighteen had read any discussion of modern educational, social, or economic conditions. Among the books most enjoyed were *Ben Hur*, *Lavender and Old Lace*, *The Rosary*, *Freckles*, *Ivanhoe*, *St. Elmo*, the novels of Harold Bell Wright, and *Maurine*. One girl enjoyed a certain bit of cheap fiction because, to use her own words, "the hero was a very good boy, and very poor, and had a very hard time, and took everything with a smile, and finally became very rich." Among the magazines most read were the *Ladies Home Journal*, *Youth's Companion*, and *McClure's*. Beyond doubt this reading is not vicious, it is not so bad in itself, but how poor to be almost the sole spiritual and intellectual good of these pupils! Clearly it is the province of the school with the help of a good library to better these conditions.

But to be convinced that a library is desirable and to make specific recommendations as to what it shall contain are two very different matters. For two reasons the latter is difficult. In the first place, it is impossible, and undesirable, to submit an extensive list of books. In the second place, no one knows what to include in such a list. A summary of opinions of many different men, such statistical tabulation as we are so free with today, would have no more value than the opinion of one man, for all opinions

would be mere opinions. Most of us who teach English have had no training to fit us to give expert advice in the matter. The technical courses in the college and the university followed as a preparation for English teaching in the schools are objective in aim and are organized with a view to presenting a more or less intensive study of the general field of literature. And it too often happens that the school course in English is merely an attempt to reproduce the university course in miniature. Nor does the training of the average librarian, with its emphasis upon "interest" for the general reader, offer any help here.

It seems that there is pressing need for a survey of the entire field of English, from the lowest grade in the elementary school to the university, by men trained in the theory of education as well as in English, in order that the work may be outlined in terms of functions and values instead of in terms of topics and titles. With such a functional outline, and with the attention centered upon the needs of the developing mind of the pupil rather than upon the objective field or rhetorical and literary fact, the library needs of the school could be more definitely stated. And with such an outline it would be found that the library needs of the school are not so extensive as we are sometimes led to believe.

However, there are some things that should be found in every library used by the English teacher. There should be a number of small student dictionaries and at least one standard unabridged dictionary; a good cyclopedia, such as the *New International*; Crabb, *English Synonyms*; if possible, Warner, *Library of the World's Best Literature*; Stedman, *Victorian Anthology* and *American Anthology*; Peet, *Who's the Author?* Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*; a classical dictionary and good atlases; a supply of magazines and the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*; some histories of English and American Literature; the works of the chief English and American writers; and biographies, memoirs, journals, and letters of the authors read in class.

There is at present a growing demand that the library equipment suggested above be extended to include the best of recent and contemporary literature. If the spirit of each age finds expression in its literature—and that is certainly true of the age in which

we live—it seems that the school course in literature should be enlarged so as to enable the teacher to give some kind of guidance to the understanding of the modern spirit through modern literature. The school course in literature seems to have crystallized the sentimental introspection of the early and middle nineteenth century, and there is need for the introduction of new matter. Specific suggestion is here impossible, and the individual teacher, except one in most fortunate circumstances, in making selection is without guide other than the commercial reviews put out by the publishing houses. A committee of well-trained teachers, favorably situated, could do good work for the schools by suggesting from time to time what it might be well to add to the library from this field.

Another definite enlargement of the work of the English department is demanding that the library be increased by additions from contemporary biography, books of travel and descriptions of places and peoples, and discussions of social, moral, and economic questions. Notable among recent departures along this line is the work in moral and vocational guidance in the Central High School of Grand Rapids, Mich. And this is a legitimate extension of the work of the English department. It is not an abandonment of English as a “cultural subject,” nor a regrettable yielding to the “commercialism of the age”; but it is a much-to-be-desired change in order to give subjective unity to the work of the pupil, to give content to the course.

Not only should there be a good library, but in the larger schools there should be a trained librarian in charge all the time. It is better to limit several of the advanced classes in English and history to four recitations a week and thus free the time of one teacher for library work, than to have a library unusable for want of a keeper.

The English room, particularly the literature room, should be specially equipped for the work. The Wagnerian idea of having all physical stimuli contribute to the desired artistic effect should be incorporated in our plans for the English room. Many of our large school buildings are mere aggregations of the one-room country schoolhouse, with its seats for the pupils, desks for their

books, and boards for their sums. The science room is about the only room that has been differentiated in equipment to meet the needs of the work. One teacher writes:

Make the recitation room as much as possible like a scholar's den. Fill it with books and pictures. Get rid of the conventional blackboards and benches. If you can beg, borrow, or steal them, have a rug or two and a fireplace. To have a phonograph with Burns's, Shakespeare's, and Kipling's songs, to say nothing of dialogue and oratory done by artists, would help.

Another teacher describes his room as follows:

About one hundred fifty volumes bearing directly on the subjects taught and for extra reading (these books belong to the room and are not taken out); a chart of English history and literature in which the whole course of history may be traced from the earliest times to the present; a map of England and a map of Europe together with a small literary map of England; complete equipment for lantern, both for slides and for postals, or other pictures, which may be reflected upon the screen; pictures of Canterbury Cathedral, Stratford-on-Avon, trial of Jennie Deans, the Colosseum, Milton dictating *Paradise Lost*, and the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

The same teacher comments further:

Where possible it is advisable to have a reference library in each English room for the reason that the teacher can then have a general oversight of the reading, can give some hints as to the best way to use reference books and libraries in general, and can get much more work done.

Every English teacher should have, at least upon occasion, the use of a room equipped with a lantern and a reflectoscope and a good supply of slides and pictures for projection. In small schools, where a lantern is impossible, the need may be met in part by means of sets of pictures.

Maps of Europe, England, America, and specialized maps of the English lake district, the Scott country, the Dickens country, should be in every room in which literature is taught. Outline maps are as useful to the teacher of literature as to the teacher of history.

The composition teacher also needs material helps. Each composition room should have several copies of Woolley, *Handbook of Composition*, Miss Ashmun, *Prose Literature for Secondary Schools*, Smith, *Synonyms Discriminated*, and small students' dictionaries. There should also be well-classified exercise material

for drill in the elements of grammar and sentence structure. Each department should have the use of some means of rapid duplication of exercise material. It is often desirable to duplicate several class themes on the same subject and put the copies into the hands of the pupils for classroom work. A simple hectograph may serve. Better still is the Edison rotary mimeograph or the Multigraph.

The committee recognize that the report is, in some sections, general rather than specific. It has seemed impossible to make it otherwise. Attention has been called to a few problems which need further attention. In the first place, the outlining of the English course in terms of functions and values will require much earnest work. This, in part at least, seems to belong to the already authorized Committee on Course of Study. In the second place, there is need of an organized means of recommending each year a short list of books such as the schools should add to their equipment in contemporary literature, books of fiction, poetry, drama, biography and travel, both English and foreign. Third, there is need for a great deal of exercise material for presenting quickly the essentials of grammar and sentence structure, and for rapid drill without the present waste in mere clerical work.

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NOTE.—The members of the committee will be glad to hear from anyone interested further in the question of English equipment.